



“Pharm Parties”

By Laura S. Otte

With an increasing number of medications available and being prescribed, medicine cabinets across the county are bursting with the danger and temptation of youth to experiment with prescription drugs to get high. According to 2010 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, 13.3% of Calhoun County 7th graders took painkillers without a doctor’s prescription within the past 30 days. A study conducted by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America found that 62 percent of teenagers say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets and 50 percent say they're easy to get through other people's prescriptions. Because these medications are prescribed by medical professionals, youth mistakenly believe that using prescription medication not prescribed for them is “safe.”

Over the past several years, the media has addressed the dangerous phenomenon known as “Pharm Parties” at which youth bring prescription medications they have likely obtained from the medicine cabinet at home (called “pharming”) to a gathering and dump them into a large container. Youth at the party are then able to reach into the bowl, grab a handful of miscellaneous drugs, and wash them down with alcohol. Whether or not Pharm Parties take place exactly as depicted by the media has been debated, but evidence shows youth are abusing prescription drugs, and over the counter medications such as cough syrup, at an alarming rate. Youth might not be getting together for the sole purpose of sharing prescription drugs, but when they attend a party, prescription drugs are very likely to be involved because they are the easiest drugs to obtain.